

BOOKS BY OUR MEMBERS

CASTRO UNCOVERS HEALTH-CARE

With some of the best (and maybe some of the second-best) minds in this country trying to figure out what to do about health care, few books could be more timely or useful than **Janice Castro's** *The American Way of Health: How Medicine Is Changing and What It Means to You* (Little, Brown, 288 pp., \$19.95 hardcover, \$9.95 paperback). Castro, an OPC Board member, covers health matters for *Time* magazine and obviously knows her way around the beat. Without evading the complexities of a system that spends more than \$2.5 billion per day, she tries to stick to the key points.

She leaves no doubt that changes are necessary and that government has a vital part to play, whether in providing for older people, assuring dental treatment for children or caring for the mentally ill. However, she also emphasized

the role of the individual: "All of us must curb our medical greed. All of us must stop pretending that someone else is paying the bills."

Castro's book gives a clear exposition of the basics of the health situation, showing how it is handled elsewhere and exploring the alternatives that exist. Without giving a specific prescription, she outlines the possibilities that seem workable. And whether or not the Clinton program goes through, Castro credits the President for a "remarkable thing"—making health care this country's top domestic issue. Anyone wanting to understand how we got into the health mess, and how we may get out of it, will find this book essential. —*Herbert Kupferberg*

READ ABOUT A REAL RESCUE...

Just about everyone knows of the five Sullivan brothers, the courageous sailors who died together on an

American warship sunk by the Japanese in the Battle of Guadalcanal. But few people know what really happened in that tragedy. **Dan Kurzman** is one of them, and he tells their story graphically—along with the stories of the hundreds of others who perished in the disaster in *Left to Die: The Tragedy of the USS Juneau*, published in hardcover by Pocket Books (335 pages, \$23).

Kurzman, a former *Washington Post* correspondent and an OPC member who won the Club's Cornelius Ryan Award, sums up the really sad part of the Juneau's fate in the three words of his title: Left to Die. While most of the crew aboard the Juneau, an anti-aircraft cruiser, were killed instantly when two Japanese torpedoes smashed into the ship, about 140 others were thrown into the water. Many were badly wounded, but they hung on to debris and rafts, hopefully awaiting rescue. For nearly all, it never came.

The other nearby U.S. warships sailed quickly away, appar-

ently without noticing and without reporting that there were survivors. Through an incredible sequence of blunders, oversights and mixups, it took almost a week before they were spotted from the air and rescued. When they were finally picked up, 10 were still alive—the rest having either bled to death of wounds, perished of thirst and hunger, or, even more horribly, been devoured by sharks.

Eventually, an investigation was held, and the commanding officer involved was found to be at fault. But until now, the full story has never been told. In fact, the Navy tried to depict those who died, including the five Sullivan brothers, as heroes—which, of course, they were—and not as the victims of bureaucratic bumbling and fumbling—which they also were.

So Kurzman's book, in itself a well-told and engrossing tale of a tragedy and its ensuing cover-up, also serves as a well-deserved memorial, long after the event, for men who bravely and needlessly died.

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Editor:
Amy Sivco

Associate Editor:
Al Kaff

ADDRESS: OPC,
320 East 42nd St., Mezzanine,
New York, N.Y. 10017

FAX:
(212) 983-4692

OPC CALENDAR 304 EAST 42ND ST. RESERVATIONS 983-4655 LODGING, MEALS 986-8800

FOP Committee Appeals for Release Of 148 Journalists

BY NORMAN A. SCHORR AND DINAH LEE

The OPC Freedom of the Press Committee has been active on several fronts.

Appeals for the release of 148 journalists imprisoned in 32 countries were sent by facsimile to the heads of those governments on April 27, the day after the Annual Awards dinner, where the list was published in copies of *Dateline*.

China headed the list with 26, Kuwait followed with 22; Ethiopia, 18; Turkey, 15; and Syria, 12. "For humanitarian and other reasons," the OPC letters stated, "we urge you to end the unjust imprisonment and cruel treatment" of the journalists named.

The letters prompted several reactions. Here is a sampling:

The AP story on the subject was carried by various papers, including Key West, Fla., *Citizen* and the Clinton, Ind., *Clintonian*. *Izvestia* in Moscow and the *Ukrainian Daily News* also carried the item.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow asked, on behalf of an ex-Soviet country, and through the USIA, what had been the basis for including that country on the OPC list. The source was given, and there has been no further question about it.

Two journalists in Africa whose imprisonments were protested recently by OPC's Freedom of the Press Committee have been released.

When the Palestine Liberation Organization was reported to have issued an invitation to the press to buy \$10,000 to \$20,000 tickets for reporters and photographers to accompany Yasir Arafat on his flight from Tunis to Jericho and Gaza, the OPC joined news organizations in denouncing the plan. It has since been dropped.

Mexico...

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from seeking bribes or otherwise acting improperly.

The president's office, as well as the important ministries, assign affable spokespeople to deal exclusively with foreign media, keeping in mind their

deadlines and needs and customs—such as not only not accepting bribes but possibly writing about any that are offered to embarrass the Mexican government.

In the past year, foreign correspondents have tapped into a previously unlikely source of information—Mexico's own media, which had been largely discredited by the tendency of some local journalists to pad their paypackets with bribes.

But newspaper circulation wars and a deep desire among many Mexicans for more democracy and less secrecy have resulted in much more aggressive domestic coverage of key issues.

Although the quasi-monopoly broadcaster Televisa still feeds most Mexicans a bland mix of reassuring

domestic news, soap operas and foreign features, smaller news organizations have turned into serious watchdogs.

The daily *La Jornada* led the coverage of the army's human rights abuses in the early days of the Chiapas revolt, and the new Mexico City newspaper *Reforma* and the magazine *Proceso* have done a creditable job pursuing the investigation into Colosio's assassination in March.

Reflecting on Mexico's impatience and widespread cynicism with the political process, *Proceso* emblazoned one of

its latest issues on the new presidential candidate, Ernesto Zedillo, with the daring cover title "Zedillo, the Joke."

In contrast to the United States, where foreign correspondents are largely ignored, correspondents for the better-known foreign newspapers and magazines enjoy celebrity status in Mexico. Many of their articles are picked up and reprinted in full by the local press so Mexicans can see how the rest of the world views them.

Christine Tierney of Reuters has been based in Mexico for two years.

The Overseas Press Club of America, Inc.
320 East 42nd Street, Mezzanine
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OPC Bulletin



D-Day luncheon: Larry Smith, OPC president, Andy Rooney, Bill Walton, Walter Cronkite, Jack Thompson and Ben Wright with OPC plaque that was to be placed at site of U.S. 1st Army's Press Camp in Normandy.

Correspondents Recall Bloody Omaha Beach

BY CARYN FRIEDMAN

Four of those who were there told a crowd of 140 during lunch at The Grand Hyatt in New York City recently what it was really like when members of the press corps struggled ashore on the shell-shattered beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944.

Walter Cronkite, Andy Rooney, Jack Thompson and Bill Walton shared their experiences at the luncheon, which was sponsored by the Overseas Press Club of America, the Committee to Project Journalists and the Deadline Club.

Larry Smith, the president of the OPC, presented a bronze plaque to Cronkite, Rooney and Ben Wright, a longtime friend and colleague, who set sail three days later aboard the QE 2

for the 50th anniversary celebration in France. The three were to affix the plaque on the Chateau Vouilly in Normandy. The chateau served as headquarters for correspondents who traveled with the 1st U.S. Army.

"We're thrilled with this event and fiercely proud to be sponsors—indeed, the creators—of the plaque these men will be taking to Normandy," said Smith. He went on to acknowledge the outstanding job done by Bill Holstein, the vice president of the OPC, in putting together this program, and each of the monthly programs sponsored by the club.

Holstein remarked: "I feel like this event really validates a lot of things

Mexico's News Coverage Expands

BY CHRISTINE TIERNEY

Mexico City is arguably the most important hub of foreign correspondents in Latin America, with many journalists covering not just Mexico but all of Latin America and the Caribbean out of the Mexican capital.

The foreign correspondents' association ACEM lists 147 members, ranging from China's Xinhua agency to *The Washington Post* and Spain's *El Pais*.

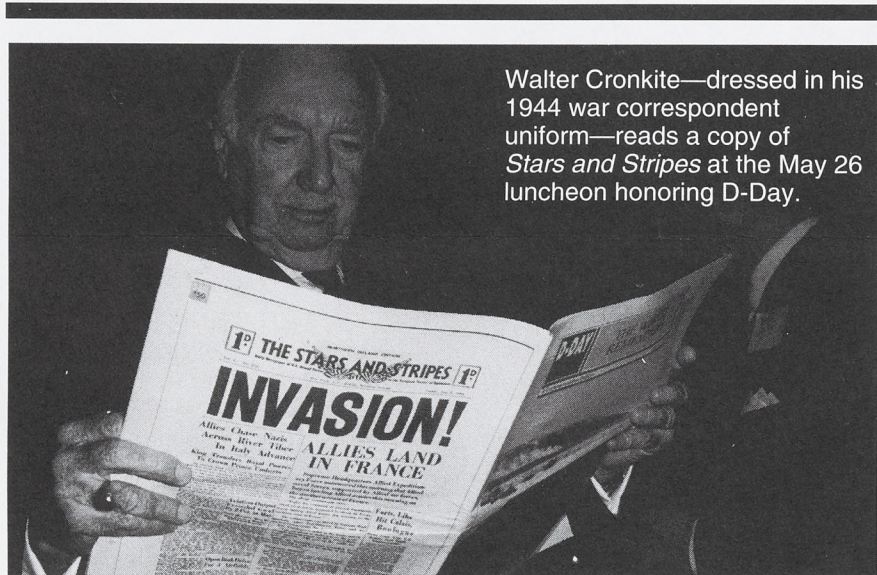
Those foreign correspondents accustomed to spending most of their time on the road at more exotic destinations have discovered a hot story in Mexico in the past year.

The debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement and the pact's implications for U.S.-Mexican relations were eclipsed by a Maya Indian rebellion on Jan. 1 in the southern state of Chiapas.

Foreign correspondents descended in droves on the poor state where they were at no more disadvantage than Mexican reporters in trying to extract information from Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolabal and Chol Mayan rebels living

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Coming in July:
It's election time again. Look for the next issue, which will include the list of candidates. (See page 4 for details.)



Walter Cronkite—dressed in his 1944 war correspondent uniform—reads a copy of *Stars and Stripes* at the May 26 luncheon honoring D-Day.

Amy Sivco

D-Day...

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we've been trying to do to rebuild and revitalize the club. The fact that these veteran correspondents would want to share this emotional moment with the OPC and then carry our plaque across the Atlantic says it all."

Still cutting a natty figure in his 50-year-old war correspondent uniform, Cronkite said: "Newspeople, all of them volunteers like Bill and Jack, were given the opportunity to go into the jaws of death. D-Day assignments were fraught with immense peril. A special bond was created between the soldiers in the foxholes, who appreciated this, and the correspondents, who were right alongside."

Recounting his own D-Day foray aboard a bomber over Normandy, Cronkite remembered: "As we went over the ocean with bombs ready to go, we were met with an incredible sight—an entire armada of ships big and small, from cruisers to battleships to destroyers, filled the ocean."

Jack Thompson, known as the dean of war correspondents, recalled going

ashore on Omaha Beach at "Easy Red," slogging through chest-deep water while shielding his face with his typewriter. Amidst the death and destruction, and with artillery shells falling, "medics worked as if nothing were happening, taking plasma bottles and draining some blood into these men with their yellowish faces," Thompson recalled.

Having flown in the first B17 missions over Germany, Sgt. Andy Rooney was subsequently assigned to the 1st Army and later to the staff of *Stars and Stripes*. He reminisced about the time and entertained the audience with his notable wit and humor.

Said Cronkite: "The greatest part of the experience was associating with the kind of guys we did in the press camps across Europe. They're my buddies, and I'm proud of them." His sentiments were echoed by each speaker.

After the program, Smith and Holstein expressed their appreciation to Ben Wright, a former president of the OPC, for his contribution to the program. Wright, who was an information officer for the 9th Air Force during the Allied invasion, acted as master of ceremonies for the program.

Mexico...

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in the jungle.

When the peace negotiations began in February, some 300 foreign and local reporters were accredited to cover the talks in the elegant colonial resort of San Cristobal de las Casas.

In addition, the recent assassination of the ruling party's presidential candidate, Luis Donaldo Colosio, in the state of Baja California plunged Mexico into political turmoil.

Many news agencies and newspapers have expanded their bureaus in Mexico in light of the NAFTA and the presidential election of August 21, which is expected to be one of the most closely watched in Mexico's fraud-marred electoral history.

Mexico is a challenging assignment. The country stretches more than 760,000 square miles, much of it inaccessible terrain, and it has a population of 85 million people, nearly a fourth of whom live in the crowded and polluted capital.

The government's byzantine ministries are hard to crack, with the most often-heard reply to any journalist's query being, "No sabria decirle," or "I couldn't tell you."

Foreign correspondents are rarely notified of news conferences and often end up chasing the headlines of the day's newspapers. Key economic data are released at odd hours, sometimes late Sunday night, particularly if the news is bad. But the current administration's emphasis on economic growth and its effort to lure foreign investment has prompted it to crack open the door a little.

For all its inaccessibility, the Mexican government takes pains to make foreign correspondents feel safe, issuing accreditation cards that serve to ward off Mexico's notorious police

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Cuban Journalists Hit Bottom

BY FRANCES KERRY

"Who invited you here?" asked a local official pleasantly, as the Reuters photographer, cameraman and I strolled into a sugar complex south of Havana. We had just arrived in Cuba and were seeking to report the ceremony of a state farm being turned into a new-style cooperative.

"Well, we saw the item about the cooperative opening in *Granma* (the Communist Party newspaper) today, and we'd like to see what's happening here," I replied, a little taken aback.

As it turned out, there was no problem with our staying, and we were given as much access as the local media to the event. But the official's question—our trip had not been organized by anyone but ourselves—illustrated the slight wariness with which the foreign media is sometimes viewed in Cuba.

Economic changes in Cuba are bringing foreign investors and more tourists, a new note of commercial realism and a desire in many quarters to present an attractive, open image to the western world.

But the island is prone to siege mentality as it battles both to overcome severe economic crisis triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the old Eastern bloc, and to hang on to a one-party socialist system which the rest of the world—with exceptions such as China, Vietnam and North Korea is telling it more or less politely to abandon.

This is reinforced by the long and tense relationship with Havana's giant capitalist neighbor to the north, viewed by Cuba as a struggle of David and Goliath. Criticism of Cuba, such as on human rights issues, is often seen as U.S.-led political propaganda.

Not that Cubans, charming and highly articulate, are not happy to chat

about their daily lives to foreigners—giving you down-to-earth details of their worries about food, medicines, transport and childrens' clothes, and telling you what they do or don't like about the system, and what they hope or fear for the future.

And even though a foreign correspondent's life is well-cushioned by hard currency, some of the realities of the economic crunch affect everyone—such as the power cut that slams the evening television news off just as it starts.

But behind this anecdotal evidence of what's going on, difficulties, not necessarily intentional, creep in when it comes to obtaining the official backdrop. Some government officials have shown willingness to open more doors to the foreign media, clearly believing that Cuba has more to gain by exposing

Hard facts are a headache. The government stopped issuing regular statistics about economic indicators several years ago.

itself than by hiding. But access to officials in many areas remains slow, laden with bureaucracy or hampered by a tradition of not talking to foreign media. There is, for example, no system of spokespersons in government ministries or departments, meaning that a quick comment on a news development, or a statistic to back an idea, can be hard to obtain.

A recent series of phone calls to a government department dealing with a key export yielded a friendly official telling me: "We will get in touch when we have news to give you."

And sometimes a tradition of exclusion seems to endure for no particular reason—such as a recent hotel opening by Fidel Castro to which the local but not foreign media were invited.

Hard facts are a headache. The government stopped issuing regular statis-

tics about basic economic indicators such as gross national product, imports and exports several years ago. Figures trickle out seemingly at random, such as the revelation during a parliamentary session last December that 69 percent of the state enterprises were running at a loss.

Bad news, such as small disturbances in a district of Havana, can be obtained from the rumor mill, but it is very hard to confirm reliably unless you're there at the time it happens.

The national media, in many countries fertile ground for foreign correspondents for a range of information or story ideas, gives a good idea of official thinking. But it is limited in range both by state control and—in current hard times—by its much reduced size.

The Cuban media, Castro said last December, should be leading the defense of the revolution, which obviously means shoring up the achievements of socialism, not looking

for its faults. The result in slimline four-page *Granma*, for example, is often implausibly upbeat.

Foreign journalists are not, of course, subject to the same guidelines, but their work is watched, especially in sensitive areas such as human rights or the scattering of dissident groups on the island.

Past expressions of annoyance with foreign reporting have ranged from friendly informal warnings to more formal reprimands, with expulsion a possibility in serious cases. A foreign photographer was recently banned, in an informal way, from covering official events for several months for sending a photograph of Castro that was viewed as disrespectful and damaging.

Frances Kerry has been a Reuters correspondent in Cuba for the past year.

U.N. Journalists Want Better Leads, Stories

BY AL KAFF

One problem faced by correspondents at the United Nations is where to find a kernel of news in the torrent of words, speeches and statements that pour out of the world organization daily.

"You read the speeches, but there is nothing there for a lead," said Norberto L. Svarzman from Argentina as he addressed university students and OPC members at an April 8 panel discussion.

Evelyn R. Leopold of Reuters agreed. "No speech, no briefing makes sense from top to bottom," she said.

The OPC Foundation and the U.N. Correspondents Association held the panel in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium at the U.N. About 75 people attended including students and faculty from seven area colleges.

Svarzman, president of the U.N. Correspondents Association and correspondent for Televisa of Mexico City, said U.N. delegates believe they are compelled to say something on every issue. Thus, reporters are inundated with texts that they must skim for news, usually in vain, he said.

For accuracy, reporters must check what U.N. bureaucrats tell them against what government diplomats say and vice versa, Leopold said. "Diplomats have less of an axe to grind than the bureaucrats," she said, explaining that bureaucrats tried to protect the U.N.'s organizational image.

Segun Adeyemi of the News Agency of Nigeria reported that interest in the U.N. is high in Africa because many conflicts and many U.N. programs are based there. But for Latin America, Svarzman saw a different scene. "I can't miss a Madonna story, but I can miss a U.N. story."

OPC Elections To Begin Soon

In July's *Bulletin*, the OPC will be announcing its candidates for the next board of governors. Here is an update on who can run again.

There will be 14 vacancies on the board. Several incumbents can run again, if they wish. Some expiring terms that require new occupants are currently held by Allan Frank, Ralph Gardner, Ed Jackson, Roy Rowan and Dave Cudaback.

Members who can run again include: Bill Holstein, Whit Bassow, Midge Longley, George Burns, Janice Castro, Felice Levin, Jackie Albert-Simon, Chris Wilcox, Elmer Lower and Elinor Griest.

For those who are interested in run-

ning and need more information about the duties assigned to the position, talk to any current board member or call Sonya Fry, the club's new manager, at the Overseas Press Club office, at (212) 983-4655, just down from The Tudor.

If you have been asked to run, make a note to send your photograph and your bio to the *Bulletin* for the election issue. Color or black-and-white photographs are fine, and your bio should include recent as well as past information. If you can add a quote that would be even better. You can address your material to:

Ms. Amy Sivco, *Bulletin* editor
PARADE magazine
711 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017.

We need new faces! Don't be shy. It's a great way to make new friends and new contacts.

What's Up In The Club...

OPC member **Maria Ferris** has a new cable TV talk show called *Common Concerns* that began airing nationwide via satellite in March on National Access Television. It has been airing statewide on the Cable Television Network of New Jersey since 1988 with 1.7 million subscribers. The program centers on mental health and family issues.

In addition, Ms. Ferris, who just spent some time in the capital, wrote to tell us about her stay and the benefits of the OPC's affiliation with the National Press Club of Washington, D.C.:

"Not being a regular to the D.C. area, my stay there in March was made more inviting, thanks to our affiliation with the National Press Club. Due to the discount the Hotel Washington offers NPC members, I got a room for \$125. Not only did I enjoy the ambience of the Hotel with its majestic decor, but the location couldn't have been better: I was within walking distance of all of the sites.

"The National Press Club is about a block from the hotel. I received a visitor's pass for the day, and in the morning I helped myself to a complimentary bagel and coffee.

"What a terrific example of reciprocal relationships between clubs."

OPC'er **Chris Willcox** was named to the new post of executive editor of *Reader's Digest*. He will continue his international duties, as well as others.